A Perſwaſive to Peace and Unity.

A

SERMON

Preached before the Right Honourable the

Lord-Mayor

AND THE

ALDERMEN

OF THE

CITY of *LONDON*;

At the Church of

St. *Mary Le-Bow*,

On Sunday *January* 16th 169$\frac{7}{8}$.

By *SAMUEL BRADFORD*, Rector of the ſaid Church.

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To the Right Honourable

Sir *Humphry Edwin*, Knt,

Lord Mayor of the City of *London*,

AND THE

Court of Aldermen.

Right Honourable,

THE *Publiſhing this Diſcourſe is purely an act of Obedience to Your Order; it being deſign'd to have gone no farther, than the Place in which it was Preach'd.*

When You were pleas'd to come in a Body to my Church, upon ſo ſolemn an Occaſion, as that *of partaking of the Holy Communion, in compliance with a Law which makes the doing ſo a* Teſt, *to all who are admitted to Publick Offices and Employments, I thought it became me to lay hold on the Opportunity, to exhort You earneſtly to promote the Good of that Church, whereof by this Practice You own Your ſelves to be Members.*

What I have urg'd for our being (as far as is possible) united, not only in Judgment *and* Affection; *but in* Communion *too, is upon such Reasons as will hold equally, where there is an* Indulgence *granted by Law, and where there is not; namely, The Precepts of the Holy Scriptures, and the Nature of the Christian Body; by both which every Christian is certainly oblig'd to promote the Peace and Unity of the Church of Christ,* not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake; *out of regard to Christ and his Church, even where he is lyable to no Civil Mulcts or Penalties for doing otherwise.*

And to prevent all jealousie, as if I had the least Intention hereby to express my dislike of Indulgence towards tender Consciences, I take this Occasion to declare, That I heartily approve it, as being thoroughly perswaded, that for one Christian to persecute another, who Conscientiously differs from him, meerly for his so doing, is a gross violation, not only of the Law of Christianity, *but even of* Nature *it self.*

Nay farther, I believe it the Duty of Church-Governours to insist upon no narrower Terms of Communion, than such as, to the best of their Judgments, regulated by Scripture, have a plain and evident

evident tendency to maintain Truth, promote Piety and Vertue, and preſerve good Order in the Churches under their Care. Which I mention with the greater freedom, becauſe I am well ſatisfied that this was the Principle upon which thoſe who ſettled the Reformation amongſt us, in the Reign of King Edward *and Queen* Elizabeth, *acted; and becauſe I doubt not but that it is the Principle alſo of our preſent Governours both in Church and State.*

But after this, the Duty of every private Chriſtian is as plain; namely, to comply with the Terms eſtabliſh'd, as far as he Lawfully may, valuing the Peace of the Church much beyond the gratification of himſelf, and being ready to do every thing for the maintaining its Unity, which he thinks Lawful to be done upon any other account whatſoever.

How the Chriſtians of this Nation came to divide themſelves into ſo many diſtinct and ſeparate Communions, I will not now inquire: but till we can attain to this Diſpoſition, I can foreſee nothing elſe, but that our Diviſions muſt be propagated without Reaſon, and without End, from one Generation to another; which is but a melancholy Thought to any one who remembers how much ſtreſs both our Saviour and his Apoſtles have laid upon Peace and Unity.

The Prayer which our Lord offer'd up, a little before his Suffering, for all who ſhould believe in him, was in theſe words; That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they alſo may be one in us; *and that for this Reaſon*, That the World may believe that thou haſt ſent me. *And St.* Paul, *in a ſet Diſcourſe occaſion'd by Contentions in the Church of* Corinth, *concerning the Gifts with which ſome were endued to a greater degree than others, prefers* Charity (*meaning* that Charity *whereby the Peace and Unity of the Church is maintain'd*) *much before the beſt of Gifts, the ſtrongeſt Faith, the moſt profuſe Liberality, and even Martyrdom it ſelf.*

Our Bleſſed Saviour, as an Example to his Followers, conſtantly joyn'd in the Publick Exerciſes of God's Worſhip, both in the Temple and in the Synagogue, notwithſtanding the many and groſs Corruptions which were at that time crept into the Jewiſh Church.

The Apoſtles in like manner, and the other Chriſtians who dwelt at Jeruſalem, *though as they were oblig'd by the Chriſtian Inſtitution, they aſſembled apart from the* Jews, *for the performing that Worſhip which was peculiarly Chriſtian, yet*

we

we never find that they deſerted either the Temple or the Synagogues, till the final deſolation of their Country. And St. Paul *himſelf, who ſo often and ſo vehemently, upon juſt occaſions, aſſerted and pleaded for the Liberty of Chriſtians, as being ſet free from the Jewiſh Yoke, yet did not at all ſcruple the making uſe of thoſe Ceremonies, which himſelf had declar'd to be abrogated, when ever it might ſerve to the benefit of the Church.*

After which Conſiderations, 'tis very ſtrange that any Chriſtian ſhould entertain ſuch ſlight apprehenſions of the Evil and Danger of dividing the Chriſtian Church, as abundance amongſt us have done.

Pardon me, if I ſeem to preſs this matter with Zeal upon You, *who, under His Majeſty, have the Government of this great City committed to You, and whoſe Examples are like to have much greater Influence than the Examples of private Men. Whatſoever others do, it certainly* becomes *thoſe who are in* Publick Stations, to fulfil all Righteouſneſs; *and I think I may be allow'd to ſay, without Offence, that a* Magiſtrate *ſhould be one who needs no* Indulgence, *but that which is by common conſent given to Humane Nature in general.*

That

The Epiſtle Dedicatory.

That whatſoever is truly and juſtly propos'd in the following Diſcourſe may be of Uſe to the Publick, and that we may all in our reſpective Stations, zealouſly and conſtantly, promote the Honour of Almighty God, the Good of his Church, and the Welfare of the Kingdom, is the hearty Prayer of,

Right Honourable,

Your moſt Faithful, and
Obedient Servant,

Samuel Bradford.

A SER-

A

SERMON

Preached before the

Lord-Mayor,

Perſwading to

PEACE and *UNITY.*

EPHESIANS 4. 3.

Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.

WE are aſſembled at this time not only to hear the Word of God read and preached, and to offer up our daily Prayers and Praiſes to the Divine Majeſty; but alſo to Celebrate

brate the moſt peculiar and Solemn Office of our Chriſtian Religion, Namely the Commemoration of our Saviours Death, according to his own Inſtitution. By doing of which we openly profeſs to the World, Firſt, our Communion with the Father, and his Son Jeſus Chriſt, by that Spirit which proceedeth from both; and in the next Place our fellowſhip one with another. We declare hereby that we are Members of that part of the Chriſtian Church which is eſtabliſh'd in this Nation, and not of that only, but of the truly Catholick Church throughout the World. For the Sacrament of the Lords Supper was intended by our Lord, as a Badge and Symbol of ſuch our Communion. And upon this Occaſion I thought I could not chuſe a more proper Subject, than the words I have now read to you, wherein we are ſo expreſly exhorted to regard, and to promote, as far as in us lyes, the Unity and Peace of the Church of Chriſt. *Endeavouring to keep* &c.

St. *Paul* had been, in his preceding Diſcourſe, putting the *Epheſians* in mind of the Extraordinary Grace of God towards them, in taking them within the Pale of his Church; that whereas they had
Ch. 2. 11, 12, 13. been *Gentiles, without Chriſt, Aliens from the Common wealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the Covenants of Promiſe*; Nay, *having no hope, and without God in the World*: they were *Now brought near to God by the Blood of Chriſt*, being together with the believing Jews adopted into his Family. He exceedingly magnifies this their Privilege, in thoſe Remarkable
v. 19, 20, 21, 22. Words, *Now therefore ye are no more ſtrangers and Forreigners; but fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the Houſhold of God, and are built upon the Foundation of the Apoſtles and Prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf*

ſelf being the Chief corner-ſtone, in whom all the building, fitly Framed together, groweth into an holy Temple in the Lord, in whom you alſo are builded together, for an Habitation of God, through the Spirit.

To the ſame purpoſe he goes on, throughout the Third Chapter, both to extol this Favour of God towards them, and to pray that they might be thorowly Senſible of it; after which he begins this *Fourth* Chap. with a Serious Exhortation to them, that they would walk worthy of this their Vocation, particularly in the exerciſe of much Humility and Charity. *I therefore the Priſoner of the Lord beſeech you, that ye walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are call'd, with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in love*; and as it follows in the words of my Text, *Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.* Ver. 1, 2.

From which Connexion of the Words we may obſerve by the way, That *the keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace* (whatever that means) is abſolutely Neceſſary to our *walking worthy of our Chriſtian Vocation*, and that in order to this, we ought to have our minds well ſeaſon'd with *Humility* and *Charity*, two moſt excellent Chriſtian Graces, whereby we ſhall be beſt diſpos'd to the exerciſe of all other Vertues, which our Holy Religion Requires, and for want of which it comes to paſs, that the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity are ſo miſerably divided as they are at this day. But I proceed to the words themſelves; in treating of which I propoſe this Method.

I. To Explain the Duty which the Apoſtle here urges upon the Epheſians, ſhewing what it is, *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.*

2. To consider the Obligation which all Christians are under, to the Practice of this Duty.

3. To shew how we may best attain to the Practice of it.

1. To Explain the Duty it Self, shewing what it is, *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.*

By the *Unity of the Spirit* I conceive the Apostle here means such an *Unity*, as properly belongs to a Body, which is inspired in the whole, and every part of it, by *one and the same Spirit.* I know, that some will have this phrase to signifie no more, than an *Union of the Spirits* or *minds of Christians.* This is indeed contain'd in it; but 'tis by no means the full Sense of the Expression. The *Union* which is between Christians, is Principally and in the first Place in their *Minds* or *Spirits*; but I take the word *Spirit* here to relate to the *Divine Spirit*, which, as the Apostle presently after observes, animates the whole Body of Christ, and makes it indeed to be *one.*
ver. 4. For so it follows, *there is one Body and one Spirit.* And to the same purpose 'tis frequently expresst in other places. Thus in the preceding part of this
Chap. 2. 22. Epistle; *In whom*, that is, in Jesus Christ, *you also are builded together, for an Habitation of God, through the Spirit.* And very Remarkably in the Former
1 Cor. 12. 12, 13. Epistle to the Corinthians; *As the Body is one, and hath many Members, and all the Members of that one Body, being many, are one Body: So also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or Free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit*; That is, The Church of Christ may be fitly compar'd to the Body of a Man, which has many Members; but

but all of them united by *one Spirit*, which is diffuſed through every part, and quickens the whole. Juſt ſo, ſays he, the Church conſiſts of abundance of particular Believers; but theſe are all admitted by *Baptiſm*, to the Priviledge of being put under the Conduct of the *Holy Ghoſt*, in whoſe Name they are baptized, together with that of the *Father*, and of the *Son*, and whoſe aſſiſtance they may conſtantly depend upon, if they do not reſiſt and drive him away from them. And they are farther conſtantly *made to drink into the ſame Spirit*; that is, by partaking of the other Sacrament, that of *the Lords-Supper*, Particularly of the wine there poured out, they may receive, and if they are ſincere Chriſtians, they do ſo, farther communications of the ſame *Spirit*. Now this gives a clear account of the Expreſſion in the Text, *the Unity of the Spirit*, that is, ſuch an Unity, as becomes a Body thus animated by the ſame Spirit, *viz.* an Unity in *Judgment*, and an Unity in Affection; or in other words, an Unity in *Truth* and in *Charity*, together with all that *External* and *Viſible* Unity which is Naturally conſequent upon the Former. For ſo it follows, *in the bond of Peace*, by which is meant *a Peaceable Converſation* with each other, as in all other reſpects, ſo eſpecially in *Spiritual* Affairs; the avoiding all Diſſenſion and Diviſion, with reſpect to *External Communion*; the *Living and Converſing* together, and eſpecially the *Communicating* with each other in all the Ordinances, and Inſtitutions of Religion, as *one Body*. This peaceable demeanor is *the Bond* of Unity amongſt Chriſtians not only ſhewing them to be *one*, but preſerving them in that ſtate. So that you may take my Explication of this Duty, in the *Four* Following Particulars.

1. *To keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace* implys, the maintaining as much as may be an Unity in *Judgment*, especially as to the main and Principal Doctrines of the Christian Faith.

2. It implys also the preserving and cherishing of *Love* and *Affection* amongst Christians.

3. It farther implys a quiet and Peaceable, Nay a kind and amicable demeanor towards each other, in our whole *Conversation*.

4. It implys yet more particularly a preserving entire, as far as in us lyes, the *External Communion* of the Christian Church.

1. *To keep the Unity* &c implys the maintaining, as much as may be, an Unity in *Judgment*, especially as to the main and Principal Doctrines of the Christian Faith. This is what St. Paul exhorts the *Corinthians* to; *Now I beseech you Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no Divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joyn'd together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment.*

1 Cor. 1. 10.

'Tis true; Christians, as well as all other Men, may be suppos'd, and fairly allow'd to differ in some matters which are of no great consequence; but there are certain Truths deliver'd down to us in the Scriptures, from our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, which are to be faithfully adher'd to by all Christians, even such as wherein Christianity it self is concern'd, and which cannot be denyed without Subverting, or at least shaking and endangering the Foundation; as there are likewise many others, which are necessary to be understood and believ'd, if we will form any true Scheme of our Religion, or arrive at any competent Knowledge and Understanding in it. Why else should St. *Paul* require *Timothy to hold fast the*

the form of ſound words which he had heard of him? 2. Tim. 1. 13, 14. And again, *to keep by the Holy Ghoſt, that good thing which was committed to him*? Why did he order him to abide *at Epheſus* on purpoſe, as himſelf ſayes, 1. Tim. 1. 1. 3. *that he might charge ſome, that they ſhould teach no other Doctrine?* Why does he command *Titus to ſpeak* Tit. 2. 1. 2. *the things that become ſound Doctrine?* And to teach thoſe under his charge *to be ſound in the Faith?* And why again does he in the ſame Epiſtle ſet it down, as a Qualification of thoſe Biſhops whom *Titus* ſhould ordain, that they ſhould *hold faſt the faithful word, as they had been taught, that they might be able by ſound* Tit. 1. 9, 10, 11. *Doctrine both to exhort, and to convince the gain-ſayers, and to ſtop the Mouths of unruly and vain talkers and deceivers?* And laſtly, what elſe can St. *Jude* mean, Jude, v. 3. by his exhorting thoſe to whom he writes, *Earneſtly to contend for the Faith which was once deliver'd unto the Saints?*

Now as all the Truths of Chriſtianity, which are propos'd to our belief, are contain'd in the Holy Scriptures, which we Proteſtants aſſert to be the compleat *Rule* of our *Faith*, as well as our *Manners*; So the main and Fundamental Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, were at firſt contain'd in that, ſhort *Formulary* of *Confeſſion* which was made by Chriſtians at their *Baptiſm*. This *form of ſound words*, was, according to the Apoſtles Expreſſion, *committed* to or *depoſited* with thoſe, whom they ordain'd to Officiate in the Church, to be by them *delivered unto the Saints*, that is, to all Chriſtians, at their *Baptiſm*. And accordingly the profeſſion then made, is by the antient Chriſtian Writers commonly call'd, *the Rule of Faith*; the Summ of which was, that the Perſon baptized did acknowledge *God the Father*, as the Creator

Creator of all; together with his *only begotten Son*, as appearing in our Nature, and dying for our Redemption, riſing again, and aſcending into Heaven, and ſitting on the right hand of the Father, from whence he is expected to come again, and judge the World; and alſo *the Holy Ghoſt*, the Sanctifier, the Guide, and the Comforter of all True Chriſtians; with the Reſurrection of the dead, and the Life of the World to come. This was afterwards drawn up into that Form, which we have in the *Apoſtles Creed*, which, as occaſion was given, came to be farther explain'd in thoſe which we call, the *Nicene*, or *Conſtantinopolitan*, and *Athanaſian* Forms. Farther *explain'd* I ſay; For theſe laſt mentioned Forms do contain no more in ſubſtance, than that which we call the *Apoſtles Creed*; as *that* likewiſe contains the very ſame in Subſtance, with the antient Forms of Profeſſion made at Baptiſm. So that there are no *New Articles* contain'd in any of theſe *Creeds*; but only an *explication* of the ancient *Baptiſmal Profeſſion*, according to the Tenor of the Holy Scriptures, and agreeable to the declar d Judgment of the Firſt and beſt Chriſtian writers extant. So that it is in truth the want of a due acquaintance with the holy Scriptures, at leaſt the true ſence and meaning of them, as underſtood by thoſe, who were neareſt to the time of their being written, and beſt able to judge in the caſe, that makes ſome in our days, whilſt they profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, yet ſo openly and vehemently to inveigh againſt theſe *Forms* in which our Chriſtian Faith is expreſt. Which I the rather take notice of, becauſe there have appear'd of late divers writers, who have in a bold and inſolent, nay rude and Scurrilous manner, attackt thoſe Doctrines, which have ſo conſtantly

ſtantly from the beginning of Chriſtianity been own'd, as ſome of the firſt Principles of the Chriſtian Religion. Nay it is too apparent that under the pretence of oppoſing the Doctrine of the bleſſed *Trinity*, all Religion, eſpecially that which hath been *reveal'd*, hath been Struck at. So that we may in this Age repeat St. *Jude's* complaint, that *there are certain men crept in, ungodly Men, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; upon which account we ought to exhort one another, as he did thoſe to whom he wrote, *earneſtly to contend for the Faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints*; and that, not only againſt *Socinianiſm*, and *Arianiſm*; but even againſt groſs *Scepticiſm*, and downright *Infidelity*. Now if we would *keep the Unity of the Spirit*, in this firſt ſenſe which Iam ſpeaking of, we ought ſtrictly to adhere to the Doctrine which we receiv'd, when we were baptized *in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*, and thereby dedicated to our great *Creator*, *Redeemer*, and *Sanctifier*; we ſhould ſeriouſly conſider, and endeavour fully to underſtand, the Profeſſion of Faith we were then baptized into, ſettling our Judgments in all the great Articles of our Religion, by the careful ſtudy of the Holy Scriptures, which were indited by men indued with a divine Spirit, and which are therefore *able to make us wiſe unto Salvation*. We ſhould by the daily uſe of theſe endeavour to improve our minds, not only in the abſolutely neceſſary, but in all the other Doctrines of Chriſtianity, ſuch as will help us to underſtand the true Scheme, and conſequently the great worth and excellency of that Religion which we profeſs; ſtill growing and increaſing in all that uſeful Knowledge, which theſe Books are able to furniſh

Jude, ver. 4.

ver. 3.

furniſh us with. To which purpoſe, as we ſhould read them with ſerioufneſs and humility, ſo we ſhould make uſe of all thoſe Methods which are proper for the helping us to underſtand an antient Book, not leaning to our own underſtandings to ſuch a degree, as may hinder us from conſulting with thoſe who are beſt qualified to aſſiſt us; adding withal our Earneſt prayers to Almighty God, for the aid of his Holy Spirit, to enlighten and to ſanctifie our Minds in the uſe of them; by which means we ſhall not fail to preſerve that *Unity of the Spirit*, with reſpect to our *Judgments*, which St. Paul may be underſtood here to exhort us to.

2. *To keep the Unity of the Spirit* implys alſo the preſerving and cheriſhing of Love and Affection amongſt Chriſtians.

After an honeſt care uſed for the information of our Underſtandings, we may poſſibly differ, as I obſerv'd before, in matters of leſs weight and moment, as we find ſome did even in the Apoſtles days. This may fall out from the difference there is between the Parts and Abilities of ſeveral Men. A Serious Study and Practice of the Chriſtian Religion do indeed tend to enlarge the Underſtandings and minds of men: but yet ſtill there is left that difference which Nature has made between the capacity of one Man and another. Beſides that ſome have much greater Advantages, and fairer Opportunitys for the improving of themſelvs, than others have. Whence it comes to paſs, that there are *weak* as well as *ſtrong* Chriſtians; *babes in Chriſt*, ſuch as *have need of milk*, as well as others that are well grown, and are able to digeſt *ſtronger meat*. Even men of equal capacities and abilities, may through their different Advantages, through their

their tempers, or their Converſations, have differing apprehenſions concerning ſeveral points of Chriſtianity it ſelf.

But yet in this caſe, we may all *keep the Unity of the Spirit*, with reſpect to our *Affection* and *Charity* towards each other. Chriſtian *Love* is due to the Chriſtian *Temper* and *Spirit*, wherever they are to be found. The Image of God and our Redeemer, wherever it appears, ought to engage the hearty approbation, and cordial Love of Every one, who pretends to bear the ſame Reſemblance.

Mutual Charity is ſo neceſſary to the Members of the Chriſtian Body, that we know 'tis made by our Lord himſelf the *diſtinguiſhing Character* of his Diſciples, this being the ſpecial and peculiar Precept which he gave them, that *they ſhould Love one another, even as he had lov'd them.* St. John therefore calls it, *the Meſſage which they had heard from the beginning, that they ſhould love one another.* There is indeed nothing more univerſally recommended to Chriſtians, and nothing more vehemently urg'd upon them than this kind of Unity. Thus St. *Paul, Be of the ſame mind one towards another*; and Again, *Put on, as the elect of God*, that is, as ſincere Chriſtians, *Holy and Beloved, bowels of mercies, kindneſs, Long Suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye. And above all theſe things, put on Charity, which is the bond of Perfectneſs*; that is, which is the moſt perfect Bond or Tye, whereby Chriſtians are united to each other. And to name no more, juſt before the Text, as an Introduction to this *keeping the Unity of the Spirit*, he exhorts the Epheſians to be *long-ſuffering, forbearing one another*

John, 13. 34, 35. 1 John, 3, 11. Rom. 12. 16. Col. 3. 12, 13, 14. ver. 2.

in love. And according to all theſe excellent Precepts, it was the mutual Affection of the primitive Chriſtians, by which they were diſtinguiſhed, and for which they were envied by their Enemies, when they could look upon them and ſay, *Behold! how they love one another!* Nothing ought to ſeparate one Chriſtian from another in this reſpect, but what at the ſame time ſeparates him from Chriſt. For whilſt we are Members of the ſame Body, whilſt we are all united to the ſame Head, 'tis abſurd not to retain a regard to each other, ſuitable to ſuch a Relation.

3. *To keep the Vnity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace* farther implies, a quiet and Peaceable, nay a kind and amicable demeanor towards each other, in our *whole Converſation.*

This is neceſſarily conſequent upon the former, ſuch a Behaviour being the natural effect of inward affection and good will; ſo that I need not inſiſt largely on this, after what I have ſaid upon the foregoing particular. I ſhall only take notice, that as it includes a meek and Gentle treatment of each other, in all reſpects, ſo more particularly with reſpect to our Speech. I mean, that we never provoke or irritate our fellow Chriſtians, by any rude or undecent Language, which is ſo far from being allowable in a *Chriſtian*, that it is altogether unbecoming a *Man.* But I thought fit to mention it, both becauſe this is too common a fault, *the Tongue* (as St. *James* expreſſes it) *being an unruly evil*; inſomuch that *if any man offend not in word*, he pronounces him *a perfect man and able to bridle the whole body*; as alſo becauſe the conſequences of it are oftentimes very deplorable, as the ſame Apoſtle obſerves;

James, 3. 8.

verſe 2.

Behold!

Behold! how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our Members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of Nature, and it is set on fire of Hell; but especially, because too many professing Christianity, to the great dishonour of their profession, upon every slight difference that happens amongst them about their Opinions in Religion, are exceedingly prone to this Evil, accounting it a Testimony of Zeal for God and his cause, when they can express themselves in very bitter and reproachful terms; not considering what St. *James* adds in the conclusion of that Discourse, that *this Wisdom* (namely which is accompanyed with *bitter envying and Strife*) *descendeth not from above; but is Earthly, sensual, devilish*, whereas *the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then Peaceable, Gentle, and easie to be intreated, full of mercy and of good fruits; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in Peace of them that make Peace.* For which Reason St. *Paul* thus bespeaks the *Ephesians*, in the Chapter out of which my Text is taken; *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamor, and Evil Speaking be put away from you, with all Malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christs sake hath forgiven you.* Indeed for a Peaceable behaviour in the general, the New Testament throughout abounds with plain and excellent Precepts. Thus St. *Paul*, to the *Thessalonians*, *Be at peace among your selves*; and Again, *Be patient towards all men. See that none render Evil for Evil unto any man: but ever follow that which is good, both among your selves, and to all men.* In like manner to *Timothy*, *Follow Righteousness, Faith, Charity, Peace, with them that call on the Lord out of*

ver. 5, 6.

ver. 15, 17, 18.

v. 31, 32.

1. Thes. 5. 13, 14, 15.

2 Tim. 2. 22, 24. 25.

of a pure heart; and a little after, *The Servant of the Lord must not ſtrive: but be gentle unto all men; Patient, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves*; which, tho' it be ſpoken primarily to the *Biſhops* and *Paſtors* of the Church, yet concerns all Chriſtians in general, as being *Servants* alſo of the ſame *Lord*. I ſhall conclude this particular, with our Saviours precept to his immediate followers, and in them to all that ſhould afterwards believe in him; *Have ſalt in your ſelves, and have Peace one with another*. That is, See that you be ſeaſon'd with that Spiritual Wiſdom, and that divine Temper of mind, which may render you acceptable both to God and men, and particularly, in order to the ſame end, maintain a conſtant Peace and agreement among your ſelves.

Mark 9. 50.

4. *To keep the Vnity of the* Spirit *in the Bond of Peace* implies yet more particularly, a preſerving entire, as far as in us lies, the *External Communion* of the Chriſtian Church.

I am ſenſible, that conſidering the divided ſtate of the Church in the preſent Age, this is a very tender point to diſcourſe of; but as I ſhall ſpeak, ſo I deſire to be heard, in the Spirit of meekneſs and Charity, which, I am ſure, is the true Spirit of Chriſtianity.

External Communion may be very properly call'd *the bond of Peace*, in as much as it ſhews to all the World, that Chriſtians own themſelves *one Body*, and eſpecially as it tends to preſerve them in that State; this being one great end and deſign of our being appointed to meet together, to celebrate the publick worſhip of God, that when we glorifie God and our Redeemer with *one Heart and one Mouth*, our

our *Charity* towards our Chriſtian Brethren may at the ſame time be *Inflamed*. And that it is apt to have this effect, I dare appeal to the experience of all that are ſerious and conſtant in the publick worſhip according to the Inſtitution of the Goſpel. And there can be no doubt, but that abundance of that uncharitableneſs, which is to be obſerv'd in Chriſtians towards each other, proceeds from their having firſt divided Communions, and refus'd to worſhip God and their Saviour together. How many unchriſtian Contentions among our ſelves in this Nation, may be attributed Solely to this Cauſe, I leave all that hear me to judge. For after all that men may talk of the *Duty*, and the *Poſſibility* of Chriſtians, who are of different Communions, Loving one another, ſuch is the Weakneſs of humane Nature, and the coldneſs of Chriſtian Charity, that, as experience convinces us, men are eaſily carry'd from difference in communion, not only to a coolneſs in affection, but as the conſequence of that, a diſtance, and a ſhyneſs in converſation. Firſt the differing parties admit unkind thoughts of each other, then often proceed to hard words, to uncharitable cenſures, either of the opinions, or which is worſe, of the Intentions of thoſe that differ from them, and it may be at laſt come in good earneſt to ſtrive for Maſtery, to ſtruggle for ſuperiority and preeminency, to contend for Power and Dominion.

But beſides all the Benefits, which reſult from *keeping the Unity of the Spirit*, &c. in the ſenſe I am now ſpeaking of, and the Miſchiefs which evidently flow from breaking it, (which are more than I can have time now to enumerate) that which I would propoſe to your impartial conſideration is, that the

Nature

Nature and *Frame* of that Religion, which we all profeſs, obliges us to be *One* in this reſpect. The Firſt Chriſtians aſſembled in *one place*, offering up their Devotions daily *together*, under the Direction and conduct of the Apoſtles, as long as their number would permit them ſo to do. Thus we read, in
Acts 2.1. the beginning of the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*, At the day
ver. 44, of Pentecoſt, *they were all with one accord in one Place.*
45. And afterwards in the ſame Chap. *All that believ'd were together*; and Again, *They continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from Houſe to Houſe, did eat their meat with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart*; that is, they worſhip God together in the Temple, at the Hours of Prayer, and then withdrew into ſome more private apartment to celebrate the Lords Supper together (the peculiar Chriſtian ſervice) doing
ver. 42. all with great ſimplicity, Integrity, joy, and Charity; and once more, *They continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles Doctrine and fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and Prayers.* Thus did the firſt Chriſtians, and then 'tis obſerv'd that *the Lord added to the Church daily ſuch*
ver. 47. *as ſhould be ſav'd*; the unanimity of Chriſtians, together with the Bleſſing of God which is ready to attend it, having a mighty tendency to the increaſing their Number.

When the Number of Chriſtians was by this means increas'd, and the Religion of our Saviour was ſpread through many diſtant Citys and Countrys, they were then indeed neceſſitated to aſſemble in diſtinct places, to which Purpoſe the Apoſtles ordain'd and fix'd Biſhops and Paſtors in every place where they form'd a Church; but ſtill they were *one* in *heart* and *Soul*, a fair correſpondence was kept up between all theſe particular Churches, and when any

any Christian travel'd from one city to another, he immediately joyn'd with, and was receiv'd by the Church settled in that place to which he came, as may be easily discern'd in the Sequel of that History of the Acts of the Apostles.

Every Christian is in truth a Member of the *Catholick Church of* Christ, and consequently dispos'd, if he be rightly instructed in his profession, to joyn with any sound part of the Church throughout the World, wherever his business or occasions shall lead him. But forasmuch as the *Catholick* Church must be distributed into several *particular* Churches, for the good of the whole, and the Edification of every particular member of it, each particular Christian is by consequence of right, a member of that part of the Christian Church, in which providence hath cast his lot; and where his ordinary abode and residence is, there in all reason ought his Stated and ordinary Communion to be, provided always, that no *unchristian*, no *unlawful* Terms of Communion are impos'd upon him.

If any particular Church impose any *unlawful* Terms of Communion, then a good Christian is discharged of this obligation; *that* will be a sufficient plea for his separation from it. For which reason, if the Romish Communion were established among us (which God forbid it ever should be) we, who have been Instructed in the principles of Christianity, as reform'd from the Errors and Corruptions of that Church, ought not, we could not Consistently with our Principles Communicate with it. But whereso-ever here is a Church established, under the conduct of Bishops and Pastors regularly call'd and appointed to guide and govern it, and if the State be Christian, with

with the concurrence of its Authority alſo, in which a good Chriſtian may worſhip and ſerve his Maker and Redeemer, without profeſſing or complying with any thing contrary to the precepts of Chriſtianity, I can ſee no juſt reaſon for ſeparation in ſuch a caſe.

Shall the meer pretence of prefering ſome *confeſſedly indifferent* modes or Circumſtances of worſhip and diſcipline excuſe a Chriſtian from holding Communion with that Church, to which he otherwiſe of right belongs? But where then will be any end of Diviſion? What bounds or limits can be fixt to it? How is it poſſible there ſhould be any order, any Peace, in the Chriſtian Church, if every one is at Liberty to break the Unity of the Body meerly for this reaſon, becauſe he could better approve of ſome other Modes or Circumſtances, whilſt yet he allows thoſe which are in preſent uſe to be *Lawful*?

Who is it, in all other Bodys and Societies of Men, that orders ſuch matters, but the Governours of each ſociety? And who in a Chriſtian Nation ſhould likewiſe order them, but the Governours in Church and State? And when they are ſo order'd, what has any private Member of the Chriſtian Body farther to do, but to conſider whether he can comply with a good Conſcience, or not. And if he can, ſurely the Peace of the Church, the keeping the Unity of the Body of Chriſt, the promoting concord and Charity and Edification amongſt its Members, are ſtrong obligations upon him to do it.

If any thing plainly *unlawful* be requir'd, then that reply of the Apoſtles to the *Sanhedrim* takes place; *whether it be right in the ſight of God, to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye.* But if nothing

Acts. 4. 19.

nothing *unlawful* by *Gods Word*, nothing unlawful according to our own *Judgment* and *Confeſſion*, be made a condition of Communion; I dare appeal to your ſelves, in a like form of words, *Whether it be right in the Sight of God, to break the Unity of the Church of Chriſt, Judge ye.*

I ſhould now, according to the Method I propos'd, go on to conſider the Obligation all Chriſtians are under, to practice the Duty of the Text. But that I may not exceed the limits of my Time, I ſhall confine my ſelf to what our Apoſtle himſelf hath laid down to this purpoſe, in the Context, which is indeed ſo full and emphatical, that a very ſhort Paraphraſe upon his Words may well ſuffice. 2.

The Word he uſes in the Text it ſelf is very obſervable. *Endeavouring* we render it; but it denotes (as is well known) no ſlight and ordinary Endeavour; but a very *diligent* one, a *ſtudious* and *Earneſt care to keep the Unity of the Spirit*, which plainly ſhews the weight of the Duty, and the ſtrict Obligation, which lyes upon all Chriſtians to practice it. And no leſs can be infer'd from what immediately goes before, and follows the words. Σπουδάζοντες.

In the *Firſt* verſe of this Chapter (as I have already obſerv'd) the Apoſtle intimates, that it is *a walking worthy of our Chriſtian Vocation*, that is, 'tis a behaving our ſelves Suitably to the deſign and Nature of the profeſſion we make; 'tis what Chriſtianity requires of us; and that it is ſo appears more particularly by what immediately follows the Text, *There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* What can be offer'd ver. 4. 5, 6.

more perſwaſive than this? Let us take a ſhort View of each particular.

There is one Body, that is, (as I ſaid before) the Chriſtian Church throughout the world is but *one Society*, Diſtributed into Several particular Churches, as its parts, of which particular Churches, if ſound in Doctrine and worſhip, and impoſing no unlawful Terms of Communion, each ſingle Chriſtian is of right a Member, in the place in which Providence hath caſt his Lot; and conſequently is bound to maintain and promote the Unity and Peace of the particular Church of which he is a Member, in order to preſerving the Unity and peace of the whole Body.

One Spirit; every ſound part of the Chriſtian Church, and every genuine Member of it, is under the Influence and Conduct of the Holy Spirit of God, to which if he yields himſelf tractable, uſing all thoſe means which he hath appointed for the attaining his Aſſiſtance, he will not fail to have his Judgment duly Settled, and his mind inſpired with a ſincere Love to all who are under the Influence of the ſame Spirit; the effect of which will certainly be a Peaceable Converſation, and eſpecially a readineſs to joyn with all his fellow Chriſtians in every part of the worſhip of God and his Redeemer. It follows,

As ye are called in one hope of your Calling. We all expect the ſame reward, even the Reſurrection of our Bodys at the laſt day, and the everlaſting Happineſs of the Life to come; we all hope to meet in the ſame Region of Bliſs, and to joyn and live together for ever in *one Body*, in Heaven. How then can we fall out in the way thither, or refuſe to walk together in the ſame path of Life? *One Lord*; whoſe

Authority

Authority we all equally own, whoſe Laws we profeſs to ſubmit to, and conſequently have the ſame Rule to walk by, and the ſame obligation to make us obſerve it. As fellow-ſervants we cannot diſagree, without diſowning the Authority of our Common Maſter. As fellow-Members we cannot be diſunited, without relinquiſhing ſo far our common Head.

One Faith, One Baptiſm. We all profeſs to adhere to *that Faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints*, agreeing, at leaſt in the fundamental and neceſſary Articles of it; this profeſſion we undertook at our Baptiſm, when we were all initiated into the ſociety of Chriſtians in the ſame manner, being waſhed with water, *in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt*, declaring our belief in, and our reſignation to theſe three Divine Perſons. And how then can we afterwards be excuſed, if we fall out and divide about inconſiderable and indifferent matters, which neither relate to the foundation of our *Faith*, nor contradict the Deſign of our *Baptiſm*? And to conclude,

One God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. We are children of the ſame *Heavenly Father*, and Conſequently ought to live in Brotherly Love and Charity, in perfect concord and agreement, thinking and ſpeaking and Acting the very ſame things, as thoſe who are under the ſame paternal Government and Authority, who are taken care of, provided for, and directed by the ſame Providence, and the ſame Grace.

Theſe are the Arguments, by which the Apoſtle inforceth the Duty of the Text, the ſumme of all which is, that the whole Scheme and Frame of our

Religion, its Author, its Rule, its Model, its end, do all oblige us to the keeping of unity; ſo that we cannot any way contribute towards contention or diviſion in the Church of Chriſt, without *going Directly croſs to our Profeſſion*, and *walking altogether unworthy of our Heavenly Calling*.

3. All that farther remains, is in the Laſt place to ſhew, how we may beſt attain to the Practice of this Duty I have been from the Apoſtle urging upon you. As to this, I ſhall lay down but *three* plain and eaſy Directions, and ſo conclude.

1. In order to this End, we ſhould get our minds thorowly poſſeſſed with the grace of *Humility*. This I mention firſt, becauſe 'tis that which the Apoſtle himſelf adviſeth to, as a good diſpoſition towards
ver. 1. *Unity* and *Peace*. *I beſeech you* ſayes he, *that you would*
ver. 2. *walk worthy of your Vocation*. How? *with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, keeping the Unity of the Spirit* &c.

Contention of all ſorts, and particularly in matters of Religion, generally flows from pride, an over-weening Opinion of our ſelves, and our own Judgments: whereas *Humility* diſpoſeth us to conſider impartially our ſelves, and to hear and receive whatſoever good reaſon can be offer'd by another, who differs from us; and which is more, it diſpoſeth us heartily to ſeek, and to obtain the Direction and Aſſiſtance of Almighty God, in all our inquiries after Truth, who taketh pleaſure in *reſiſting the Proud*; *but giveth grace to the Humble*.

2. We ſhall do well likewiſe to take into conſideration, and lay to heart ſeriouſly the many and great miſchiefs which contention and diviſion have brought upon the Church of Chriſt.

I need not mention the ill effects that have proceeded

ceeded from this Cauſe in Foreign Churches of old, Experience has taught us enough with reſpect to our own, in which our differences, about matters of Religion, and the Diviſions that have follow'd upon them, have produced very deplorable conſequences throughout this laſt Age. Not to mention the civil diſcord, which hath, at leaſt, been exceedingly heighten'd hereby, I fear much of that *Scepticiſm* and *Infidelity* as well as the *Profaneneſs* and *looſeneſs of manners*, that have brought a ſcandal upon our times, muſt be aſcribed to this cauſe. I am ſure *that want of Diſcipline* for the amending our manners, which all good men amongſt us complain of, muſt neceſſarily follow, upon our being divided into ſo many ſeveral Communions and Partys in Religion.

'Tis time for us now to lay theſe things to heart, when *that* which we all know *hindered* our Union, *is taken out of the way*, I mean, a deſign in thoſe, who had the management of publick affairs amongſt us, firſt to divide us, and by that means to prepare us for a change of Religion.

'Tis certainly the *Duty*, as well as the *Intereſt*, of all amongſt us who have any regard for the *Proteſtant Religion*, being now ſo happily and peaceably ſettled under another Influence, to forget our paſt contentions, whether with reſpect to the Affairs of *Church* or *State*, and to do, what in us lyes, towards the becoming entirely *one Body* in both.

We may do well, in the laſt place, to lay down this as a certain and undoubted Principle, that the Peace and Edification of the Church of Chriſt, and particularly of that part of it, to which we belong, is infinitely to be prefer'd before all thoſe little things 3.

things with reſpect to which we uſually contend and divide.

The main conſideration which prevails with a great part of thoſe who divide from the Communion eſtabliſhed amongſt us, is, as far as I can perceive, that although they allow our publick Service and Communion to be *lawful*, and *occaſionally* declare that they do ſo by their Practice, yet there is ſomething in the other way, which they *like better*, and which, they ſay, is to themſelves more *Edifying*.

Now waving all other Anſwers to this, I ſhall only recite, and leave to your Serious Conſideration two plain Texts of Scripture, (rather chuſing to ſpeak to you in Gods words, than in my own, that they may leave the deeper impreſſion on your minds;) in both which we are taught to prefer the Peace of the Church, and the Edification of our Chriſtian Brethren, before our own Satisfaction, or the meer pleaſing and gratifying our ſelves, nay even before all other conſiderations whatſoever, in matters, which are in their own Nature indifferent.

One is that of St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, where having diſcours'd of ſome differences which were ariſen amongſt the Chriſtians of that Church, about the uſe of things indifferent, namely,
Rom. 14. 17. Eating ſome kinds of Meats, and obſerving ſome ſort of days, he concludes, Firſt with this Excellent ſaying, *the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteouſneſs, and Peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*; that is, Chriſtianity conſiſts not in the Former; but in the latter. The Former are *indifferent*, and may be uſed, or not uſed, as they conduce to the Peace of the Church, and the Edification of our Brethren:
ver. 18. but the latter are abſolutely neceſſary. *For*, as it follows

follows, *he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.* And then he adds that Divine Exhortation, *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for Peace, and things wherewith one may Edifie another.* Not *the things which would most gratifie our selves*; But *the things which make for Peace*: Nay not *the things which we may Imagine our selves might be most edifyed by*; But *the things wherewith one may Edifie another.* 19.

The other Text is of the same Apostle (who had a truly large Soul, and every where expresses a generous Charity) in his Epistle to the *Colossians.* He had, in the Former Chapter taken notice of the Differences between the Judaizing Christians, and others, upon which, after other Advice he concludes, *Above all these things put on Charity, which is the bond of Perfectness. And let the Peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one Body. Charity,* it seems, was in his Judgment, to *Bind*, and Tye them, as it were, perfectly together, in Spite of all their smaller differences; and a *Peaceable Temper of Spirit*, to *over-rule* all their little controversies, about indifferent things. The word we translate *Rule* is Remarkable, alluding to the *Umpire* in their Games, who was to determine all controversies that should arise, and particularly to whom the prize did belong; as if he had said, If there Happen any differences amongst you concerning matters of Religion, not *necessary*, but in their own Nature *indifferent*, nay if you it may be could your selves prefer one way before another, yet judging neither of them unlawful, *Let the Peace of God rule in your hearts*, in all such cases; let *that* determine all such controversies; let Judgment or arbitration be always given on the side Col. 3. 14, 15. Βραβεύω.

of

of *Peace*, and *Concord*, and *Unity*; *for to these things ye are called in one Body.*

After this I shall need to add no more; but only to remind you, that the Holy *Sacrament* which we are now going to partake of, is the *Symbol* and *Badge*, of this *Unity* I am pleading for; 'tis *that* whereby we profess to the World, as I observ'd at the first, our Communion with God and our Saviour, and with all good Christians; 'tis *that* whereby, upon this Occasion, we own our selves *Members* of the *Established Church*, not as divided from the rest of the Christian Church; but as one *sound-part* of that *great Body*; and 'tis consequently *that* which strictly obligeth us to be henceforward the obedient Servants of God, the faithful Disciples of our Lord, Peaceable, Charitable, and Useful Members of his Body, Designing, and promoting, as far as in us lyes, the Welfare both of this Church, and of the Catholick Church of Christ throughout the World.

Now to that one God and Father of all, who hath call'd us to be Members of his Sons Body; to that one Lord who is the Head of this Body; and to that one Eternal and Invisible Spirit, who animates and Influences every genuine part and Member of it, be ascribed all honour, Praise, and Glory, now and for ever, Amen.

FINIS.

A Sermon Preach'd at the Church of St. *Mary le Bow*, To the Societies for Reformation of *Manners*, *October the 4th.* 1697. By *Samuel Bradford*, Rector of the said Church.

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